

Dreaming of Tomorrow

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

The choice to do a creative project was an easy one. As a student of writing who is always trying to improve his skills, the opportunity to compile this selection of poems was an incredibly rewarding experience. Writing poetry is how I express myself; it is how I tell stories. I wrote these eighteen poems with the intent to create meaningful prose and unique perspective. The themes that I chose to explore were ones that both interest me, and are dear to my heart: dreams, music, space, and love.

Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank every faculty member that I had the pleasure of working with here at Ball State University. My time in this program has been the best experience of my life.

Author's Statement

Even in my freshman year of college, I was fairly certain of what I wanted to do for this project. In fact, the prospect of doing an honors thesis was part of what attracted me to the Honors College. Unlike some of my peers, I never had any doubt about what I wanted to study at university. English classes were always my favorite courses. Reading was always my preferred recreational activity. My ultimate dream was to become a writer, and when I found that studying creative writing was possible, I jumped on the opportunity.

The time I've spent in Ball State University's writing program has been wonderful, and I've had numerous great experiences. The faculty and coursework has been fantastic, and it has helped me grow and change as a writer. Looking back at some of the early things I wrote before college, or even in my first year, provides some perspective on how much I've grown. Frankly, some of it is really bad. But I've never stopped working hard. Because of this, I approached the honors thesis project with a good idea of what I wanted to do. I wanted to do a creative project from the beginning. Though I originally went back and forth between a collection of short stories and poems, I eventually settled on poetry. My love of poetry has exploded in the past few years, and I think that the method of writing poetry is a deeply personal, expressive experience.

Of course, the decision to write a collection of poetry required a little more thought. I of course wanted to focus on a theme with my poems, exploring an idea or concept that really interested me. At first, I settled on dreams. Dreams hold a lot of mystery for me. But when I began writing for this project, I found it difficult to sit down and write poems about dreams. A few evenings passed without me producing much of

anything. This was because I was forcing myself to write about a specific thing, and that was blocking me. After that, I decided to forget the theme and just write whatever I wanted. This proved to be much more effective. Without the restriction of a topic to write about, I allowed my mind to freely wander and explore the thoughts that ran through my head. Invariably, without even trying, I still wrote some poems about dreams, but I also wrote about other themes as well. The result: a rounded chapbook-length collection of poems about dreams, music, space, and love.

Music is a theme that greatly interests me. I've gotten to the point where I cannot write creatively without listening to music, as music is also an intensely personal thing for me. I've begun teaching myself how to play guitar. This is because I realized one day that I listen to music all of the time, and I wanted to be able to make music of my own. Similarly, one of the themes that rose up during the writing process for me was the one of space. This is born of my love of science fiction novels, and I found the thought of writing science fiction poems to be irresistible. And of course love. People have been writing love poems forever. I felt it only proper to include a few of my own as well.

All of these poems hold a place in my heart and mean a lot to me. It is an incredibly rewarding experience to pour oneself into a creative work like this. Looking upon the final project fills me with pride and happiness. I am one of those writers who is never finished with something. It's when the project is torn away from me, or I reach a point where it's as good as it can get. I think that the poems in this collection are good, and I've worked on them a lot. Many of them give me ideas for other poems to write as well. Still, I'm immensely grateful for this opportunity, and I'm so happy that it all worked out this way. Enjoy.

Table Of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Author's Statement.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
A Poem is Already a Dream.....	6
Nightmares in 7/4 Time.....	7
Inheritance.....	9
Cereal Bowls and the Apocalypse.....	10
We.....	11
Stopping to Listen to Silence.....	12
<i>The One Where Christ Appeared to me in the Form of a Plumber</i>	13
Encore.....	15
So Terribly Alive.....	16
Poem in D Minor For Guitar and Piano.....	17
Love in Stereo.....	18
Sleepwalker's Blues.....	20
Acid Jazz.....	21
Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.....	22
Beachfront Property on the Sea of Tranquility.....	23
Title Pending.....	24
Crescendo	25
The Library at the End of the Universe.....	26

A Poem is Already a Dream

There is molasses in the
wallpaper, dripping
into mason jars,
into mason jars until
they brim with saccharine.

We are naked beneath a horizon
of cotton, breathing each
other's whispers.

There are wolves
in my heart, a vibrato,
a howl. One day they will rip
bloody sinew and
skin; they will tear apart
marrow and bone, cracking
ribs so they might spill
out in an endless river,
and into your arms.

This is not something I dread.

Oaken and covered in
clouds, your eyes are prismatic,
and abrupt.
I can feel
you – a patchwork
stitched onto a quilt, full
and warm.

Come,
walk to the window
with me. Gaze at
the stars, those
constellations of perfection.

We arrange the sky together.

Nightmares in 7/4 Time

The silhouettes of silken embrace
follow me where ever I go.
Why did I even bother in the first place?

Everything melts away to a low glow,
a shimmering ebony sheen,
like a swirling murder of crows.

No color, no leaves of green,
just oppressive darkness. Abrupt.
This is wrong. My veins boil like caffeine

This is wrong. W r O N g
Sweat pools at my feet, oozing
from my pores. I clutch at my

ears. I want to run. But it's impossible,

yes impossible! Please. Feet stuck

in the

floor.

I'm sorry.

This is wrong.

I'm sorry

This is w

r

o

n

g

The birds are swirling faster now.

They whip past silently, screaming into my
brain, tearing it apart.

Everything gets faster. Trumpeting. Pure noise
that gets,
faster, longer, and closer.

Tell me it gets better. Tell me that
I'm just going to open my eyes, and
see you.

You'll offer a hand

and help me up, make everything right
and smite this bad dream.
Give me sight

and fire to wash everything clean. Touch me,
lay your hand against mine, touch,
and hold. Touch and never let go.

Inheritance

A pen, long since
emptied of ink
nestled between the pages
of a faded hardback.

A few rays of the
rising sun cast across the
desk. Some quarters.

A mug of coffee, the scent
of vanilla and hickory,
steam rising in lazy
wisps.

Cereal Bowls and the Apocalypse

The morning after the calamity
when the grid went down,
and the crazies rose up, the day
martial law was declared
and roving packs
of lunatics and cannibals
prowl the
gray, lost wilderness,

a man sits alone at his
dinner table, watching the
fallout crack and bubble
his window into a sickly shade
of crystalline amber. He dips
his spoon into a bowl of
granola, watching house plants
wilt and die in real time, the sun
flickering like a filament, seconds
before being extinguished.

He picks up a newspaper and
and checks the box scores before
reading an article about the benefits
of yoga.

Rust scars the peeling paint of a bicycle,
left on its side in the brown grass,
the training wheels bent and spinning
in the breeze.

Ash starts to fall.
The man lifts his spoon, the
taste of honey, dribbling
down his lip.

We

Your heartbeat, your scent.

You.

I'm a zealot
in the church of you.

Stopping to Listen to Silence

Christmas lights glow,
flashing reds and greens
onto moonlit snow,
a fuzzy guitar humming from
my speakers.

The only thing I can
remember: the latent
scent of damp leather.

I'm a sucker for
winter and music – quiet
and subdued
melodies, moody
howling instead of
singing.

I flick the engine off
and drown in the
silence. The night
is cloudless, the snow is
bright, the trees are whispering.

The One Where Christ Appeared to me in the Form of a Plumber.

He was the plumber of
plumbers – greasy, pot-
bellied and lumbering, with
a hanging, cracked tool
belt and lacking a sense
of general hygiene. He

was a trout, swimming
along the murky riverbed,
breathing with his mouth,
sucking in deep gulps of
dirty water through his
gills. He

was the eye of the storm,
a swirl of calmness amidst
so much calamity.

He stroked his gruff
stubble, eying the
battleground, illuminated
by flickering fluorescents .

An inch of standing
water.
Let's not describe,
the smell.

With a grunt, my
curious savior slammed
the door and got to work,
the clanging and banging my
only clue as to his progress.

Like a father pacing the
waiting room, I took up
smoking and made myself
a sandwich. The sweat poured
down my head. I tried to catch my
breath, but terror had already
seized me.

Suddenly, the door flew
back, my gaze arrested by

the sight of my plumber,
basked in a holy aura,
the glow of golden
purity. I fell

to my knees and wept,
tears flowing down
my cheeks in rivers.
I professed my love and
kissed his rings.

He grunted, and my smile
disappeared when he handed
me the bill.

Encore

I always liked
listening to music with
you the most. You
knew the perfect way
to dance. The music would
make you smile, and I would
smile. I longed for that embrace,
to hold you and smell you
and rub your hands against
mine. Music would make
dreamers of us.

You would clench
your fists, lean back
and exhale, eyes lost
in a misty dream. I
would stare at your hands,

and yet, you
never told me that you
buried your dog with
those hands. That you
broke earth with those tired
callouses, slammed a spade
through the bones of an
oak tree. You never
told me you
built the coffin
yourself, sanded the
wood down until it
was frictionless.

You never told me how
you used to go back
there every day for
years, until the tree had
died and the grass had died
and the earth itself died.
Returning to
cosmic dust, you
assured me that even the sun
must die. We held
hands and watched the
rain fall.

So Terribly Alive

Everything is violet and aflame –
I want to be the blood that rivers through your veins.

We are bound in flesh.
Flesh is the only thing that can hold love.

We steal the sky. We bury the sun.
You are the fingertips through which music flows.

You and I – A kiss between lovers.
A river of comets rips through.

A voodoo dream of rebel eyes.
When all else fails: hang on the pauses between words.

Make music.
Replace your teeth with stars.

Poem in D Minor For Guitar and Piano

There's a hum lounging in
my ear that won't go away. It
sounds like a graveyard and
smells like tomorrow. The

chords ring like tendons
in a body, clenching and
unclenching. Slick bones of
ivory, rising and falling and

having real weight. Plucked
nylon vibrates the air like
electricity. I can feel the music.
It's heavy. It weighs like

endless memory. We'll always
look back and say, "Those
were the happiest days of
our lives." Unfortunate to

know the truth. The melodies
taste like forget, like a lyrical,
rainy day. Smooth, sanded
rose wood, echoing and

trembling, breathing dusty
air and exhaling. Music is
an ash tree, the scent of hickory,
the dream of yesterday.

And then the saxophones cry.

Love in Stereo

Swirling
and whirling. Singing falsetto hovering
above the ether, sliding in and out
of the slippery air.

Hold on:

Throw your heart into a
needle stack and remain.
Hope someone foolish comes
along.

*

Sometimes I feel like
a deck of cards, or a
post it note, or a pair
of fiery palms.

*

To break the surface of silence.
To surround an ocean of the infinite.
To swallow regret, just one last time.
To pain, and to pine. To be pained
for. Look at the sky.
Where are we going?

*

The plumbing in my house
is all fucked up. You have
to flush the toilet to turn
the sink on.

*

Eleven miles high is where I
love you. In the depths of
an empty book, with parchment
pages blank, ink dripping off of
the spine. A brass coin with
a pair of initials etched
in its side. Heads: your
face. Tails: a cool breeze.

*

And then a flow of
sunlight slips through
the curtains. There are
diamonds in your air.

Sleepwalker's Blues

The asphalt is nice this time of year.
There are daisies living in the cracks.

Footsteps chasing footsteps.
Dull plodding and downy pillows spitting.

A once in a lifetime opportunity!
A wildcat grins before lighting a fuse.

Street lamp on the ocean floor.
Below: a desert island.

No a dessert island!
A poem at the bottom of every glass!

It's the alone child that always returns.
Ghosts made of vinyl waltz and spin, frowning.

Fireflies hovering in the fog.
A decrepit lighthouse full of discarded gum wrappers.

Acid Jazz

We were young – with rattlesnakes
sticking out of our teeth, and time sticking
out of our rattlesnakes. We would
catch baseballs and dandelion seeds on our
forked tongues, tasting summer wine.

We were poles apart – palms free,
running from the strips of yesterday.
We would stain our feet with grass
and follow rivers until their end, dip
our fingers in the uncertainty, and
think of each other.

We were andesite, a black star.
We were liars. We practiced
déjà vu. We would wipe sweat
from our brows and taste bronze
and phosphorous.

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

Mind the shouting man, the laughing man, the
man with the bird's nest beard,
the man who's drowning in words.

-

You'll never meet a good man who drinks
Bud Light Platinum.

-

Deaf, dumb, and blind kids make bad pinball
players.

-

I ain't never watched one of them
moving pictures, and I ain't about to start.

-

Why be drunk and stupid when you could
just be drunk?

-

Stay in school kids.

-

Remember, if you flip a piece of toast in the air and it lands butter side down,
you have officially ruined toast.

-

Thousand apologies.
I'll quit fucking around.
The poem shall end, presently. But first: an image.

Dewdrops on a blue jay's beak.

Beachfront Property on the Sea of Tranquility

There is no dark side of the moon.
I just came from there, and the lights were blinding.
There's an outlet mall back there.
Right next to the outlet mall, a baseball stadium.
Low gravity hot dogs taste just as good as you'd expect.
Careful with the mustard, though.
The field was 83.6% larger.
Again, low gravity.
There are no rainouts on the moon, not until we completely terraform that is.
The batter steps up to the plate, a droop in his spacesuit.
He has forgotten himself, he has forgotten how to change the world.
There aren't many places left.
Quiet places, for bookmarks and flowers to blossom.
Quiet places, for composition notebooks and drifting laziness.
Quiet places, for poems and paper cups, dribbling earthlight.
I went swimming in the Sea of Tranquility, yesterday.
They turned it into a pool.

Title Pending

Like a vision you can touch,
I remember those books with
thunder on their spine and dreams
on the page. Those cloudy nights
spent in cloudy beds – a fog of
flashlights, and the books.

I remember those books with
wilted pages and teardrop
stains. Those were the books
that we read to each other, those
were the books that bore ink
scratches in the margins. An
underline, a star, a joyous
exclamation, a love letter.

Crescendo

It's the feeling of building, of knowing. Something
is coming. The way the waves tickle the shore,
hug close to stones made smooth by the centuries.
A lighthouse pierces the fog, revolving
slow revolutions through the air.

Overdue library books stacked around
a spiral stair, with dog eared corners and
bookmarks left to rot. Yellow and
heavy with palpability, the air is salt.

Is this not what you expected to see? A
lonely man wiping his mouth with the frayed
edges of a tie, watching the gulls dive to
the sea and fill their beaks with
tomorrow.

Galloping fingers leaf through.
Twisted hands tremble with the weight of
picture frames. Rusted, brass keys hang
heavy in the pockets of dreamers.

All things rust, in time: lighthouses,
men, books.
The man sets his book down
and looks to the sea.

Dreams gone: locked behind small doors
in skin. And
his song ends.

The Library at the End of the Universe

Skirt the rim of a black hole
and you will find it – the
frayed edges of galaxies
spiraling into the inky infinite

nothing. Looming on an asteroid –
a gray beast of ancient stonework,
the library has laid down,
not ready to die.

With a great heave, the heavy doors
swing open, swallowing up fools
and lovers. The Librarian can direct
you further. He is a quiet man,

with tired eyes and unkempt hair.
He is a man who knows many
things, unable to forget, unwanting
to return.

Night is cold in space, colder
still, and cold yet unknown.
The Library is a lonely place
at twilight. Sit in silence

and watch the stars die, burn out
like a cigarette,
slow and methodical under
a curling finger of flame, until

there's nothing left but a trillion
little particles of ash. You'll
only read a few books in your
lifetime. Make good choices.